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WORKING PAPER

**St. Petersburg University
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**TALENT MANAGEMENT
IN A NEW RESEARCH CONTEXT:
MAIN ISSUES AND PECULIARITIES**

6 (E) – 2018

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L. Selivanovskikh. Talent management in a new research context: Main issues and peculiarities. Working Paper # 5 (E) – 2018. Graduate School of Management, St. Petersburg University: SPb, 2018.

Keywords and phrases: talent management, CIS region, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan

Abstract:

This paper presents a thorough analysis of different talent management practices implemented by local companies from Kazakhstan, Belarus and Ukraine. In particular, I pay special attention to the country-specific environments that shape the peculiarities of talent management practices and provide discussion about its future perspectives within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) context. All of the case studies presented in this review illustrate how different companies from the specified countries deal with such key issues of talent management as the attraction, recruitment, indoctrination, development, motivation and retention of high-potential employees. Specifically, I demonstrate that organizations from Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Ukraine share a common feature of talent management policies, systems and practices being more formalized and highly regulated especially compared to Western – more developed – countries. It is also revealed that in Belarusian and Kazakhstani companies open performance appraisal systems are unpopular and performance-based remuneration mechanisms remain underdeveloped. Meanwhile, in Ukrainian companies, there are a persistence of elitist talent definitions and a preeminence of talent retention practices, whereas in Belarusian and Kazakhstani companies there is a prevalence of Universalist talent definitions, with former concentrating on specific aspects of talent management, i.e. the attraction, development or retention of young specialists, and the latter focusing more on talent development practices. Finally, I conclude by demonstrating that talent management is influenced by a number of factors, some of which are rather specific to Kazakhstan, Belarus and Ukraine, but at the same time can be featured as common for the CIS context.

Research has been conducted with financial support as part of the project “Support of Research projects of Graduate School of Management SPbU Academic Staff” (project No. 16.23.1456.2017)

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Introduction

The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is a successor entity to the Soviet Union, and includes the majority of the former Soviet republics, such as Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, etc. These countries are special in a way that their development was and still is strongly influenced by their existence within the framework of the Soviet ideology, though it is not just the Soviet system that forms the current environment. The collapse of socialist system in 1990s, for instance, led to massive layoffs, due to excessive privatization processes, creating for country leaders an uneasy case to solve and defining the atmosphere of instability on labor market (Poór *et al.*, 2012). Specifically, during that period of time, according to Lewis and Heckman (2006), basic compensation practices were introduced, leading to high differentiation of salaries between positions belonging to both different hierarchy levels and functions (Lewis & Heckman, 2006). As a result, these countries have begun paying more and more attention to strategic solutions in governance, including the adoption of talent management (TM) practices, implemented at firm and country levels (Novitskaya & Brewster, 2016). However, due to the misfit caused by the peculiar local context and unique cultural heritage CIS countries even today continue facing various challenges in implementation of these practices.

Though most scholars who study this particular region identify the heritage of Soviet Union as the key factor that determines the peculiarities of local HRM and TM systems (Vaiman & Holden, 2011), the nature of HRM and TM in the CIS countries (including Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Ukraine) remain understudied in contemporary literature (Latukha, 2015). The general belief is that CIS countries, to some extent, have inherited a number of “traditions” of the Soviet management system, the key characteristics of which are centralized leadership, hierarchical organizational structure, high level of bureaucracy and the substantial role of collectivism in working relations (Vlachoutsicos & Lawrence, 1990). Meanwhile, the HRM and TM systems themselves are usually characterized by underinvestment in human capital (Alas & Svetlik, 2004), poor development of business education in the region and, consequently, shortage of managers that possess required managerial competences (Vaiman & Holden, 2011); unwillingness of managers to involve their subordinates into decision-making processes and their disapproval of young specialists’ proactivity, which they perceive as a threat to their own status and authority (Skuza *et al.*, 2015).

Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, most HRM activities, including those related to TM, were limited to personnel administration and record-keeping (May *et al.*, 1998). Very little attention was paid to talent attraction processes as government authorities were highly involved in the recruitment and workers’ allocation process (Leites, 1985). Specifically, most workers got their jobs through referrals from the communist-controlled labor department, permitting nepotism and corruption. Meanwhile, training and career development were planned and strictly controlled by the government (Minbaeva & Muratbekova-Touron, 2011; Mockler *et al.*, 1996; Novitskaya & Brewster, 2016). Most attention, however, was paid to increasing professional qualifications, without taking into account particular needs and desires of the workers. Meanwhile, the compensation system was characterized by low salary differentiation with high emphasis on nonmonetary benefits (e.g., giving employees, either free of charge or at a nominal cost, an opportunity to make use of vacation hostels, Young Pioneer camps, industry-sponsored hospitals) (Gurkov & Zelenova, 2011). In particular, performance appraisals were rather unpopular since employee rewards were tied to government dictates rather than performance (Minbaeva *et al.*, 2007; Novitskaya, 2015). Workers were guaranteed a monthly wage regardless of productivity. As one can conclude, the organizational culture was matched up to the communist ideology, leaving no room for reformation and innovations.

Nevertheless, Western-like practices are gaining popularity among CIS HR professionals. With a growing number of foreign companies operating in these countries, using TM practices to obtain and sustain competitive advantages (CAs) is becoming more common. Thus,

many Western firms are investing rapidly in companies in former communist countries (Buckley, 2017; Godlewski, 2017). Despite these large investments, however, Western managers know relatively little about the specificity of the managerial practices of these countries. Since the early 1990s, East European political reforms aimed at improving productivity have instead caused decreased output, reduced wage rates, and more downsizing and layoffs. Privatization and price/wage deregulation have produced resistance to change among workers (Dixon *et al.*, 2014; Novitskaya & Brewster, 2016). Some prefer the old centralized economy characterized by job security, guaranteed pay, and highly structured jobs. Others benefit from a system plagued by corruption, the black market, and Party membership rewards. However, CIS countries continue the transition to a market economy, with changes occurring in work values, employment practices, and strategic HRM. Compared to foreign companies, CIS managerial practices are immature and the TM concept is still rather new and controversial.

With the following paper I aim to present an analysis of the Kazakhstan, Belarus and Ukraine. The former, being the largest of the former Soviet republics strategically linking the fast-growing markets in the East and the West, has surprisingly not been a very popular setting for management research. Specifically, from the HRM perspective the context has recently been considered only by a small group of scholars who aim to explore the nature of social integration mechanisms that moderate relationships between cultural distance and social integration following one Kazakhstani company, KazOil, for ten years and identifying the differences in the levels of post-acquisition social integration of two acquisitions by Hurricane and CNPC (organizations from Canada and China, respectively) (Minbaeva & Muratbekova-Touron, 2011). As for Ukraine and Belarus, the number of studies is limited as well. In particular, some authors try to solve (in 2004) the problem of Ukrainian firms experiencing managerial difficulties due to a lack of qualified managers by explaining the organizational improvement model developed based on a small advertising agency (Fuxman, 2004), whereas researchers compare current Belarusian labor management practice with that before 1989. Both studies are obsolete in terms of current trends and dynamics in the labor market of each country (Danilovich & Croucher, 2011), which is why the focus is made on the CIS context.

Labor market and HRM peculiarities of CIS region countries

Kazakhstan: Leaving the past

Since the onset of the global crisis the relationship between job creation and economic growth of Kazakhstan has been weak in different sectors of the economy, including manufacturing and agriculture. The country lacks effective mechanisms of labor market regulation, while social benefits are inadequate compared to more developed countries (e.g., due to the plunge in oil prices, salaries of workers were cut down) (Nesporova, 2015). Moreover, long-term employment elasticity in Kazakhstan is relatively low, which is due to a capital intensive economy being dominated by the oil sector and an underdeveloped private sector (International Monetary Fund, 2014). The International Monetary Fund lists several factors contributing to lower elasticity of employment to GDP, some of which are the oversized public sector negatively affecting labor market efficiency, excess demand for workers with higher and vocational education and excess supply of workers with secondary school education.

In order to ensure sustainable growth and become more dynamic and “anti-fragile”, Kazakhstan needs to set an ambitious structural reform agenda that would highlight its CAs: access to different natural resources, large territory, favorable geographic position (a “bridge” between West and East) and legal development. The key priority areas must include strengthening human capital and institutions and lowering the role of the state in a more diversified economy (International Monetary Fund, 2014). Considering the fact that Kazakhstan, unlike Russia, has made smaller and more careful steps towards achieving its long-term objectives (e.g., when shifting from the Soviet command economy to a market one), the country’s HRM landscape today is relatively more homogenous compared to that of other CIS countries.

There are some HRM issues that Kazakhstan has to deal with due to its Soviet heritage. Specifically, HR attraction and recruitment are a serious concern for Kazakhstani organizations (Davis, 2012). Even though companies operating within the country's borders try to promptly give up the outdated Soviet recruitment practices in favor of the more effective (generally) Western ones, they still employ a variety of practices that significantly differ from those implemented by Western European and American firms (Minbaeva *et al.*, 2007). In particular, Kazakhstani companies try to attract and eventually hire those candidates, who were recommended by friends, colleagues, family members or acquaintances (i.e., recruiting is realized on the basis of "word of mouth"). Moreover, companies tend to give promotions to current employees rather than hiring new workers for open positions, even if the latter are better suited and more qualified for the job: for instance, attracting and recruiting foreign specialists is difficult due to inefficient use of state quotas for foreign workers and various bureaucratic procedures (Anderson & Hancilova, 2011; Yessengeldin *et al.*, 2015). Nevertheless, large Kazakhstani companies do have a rigorous recruitment process; however, some of the stages in the selection process that should ensure fair hiring based on merit are considered to be redundant and omitted (Minbaeva & Muratbekova-Touron, 2013).

HR development practices implemented by Kazakhstani organizations are similar to those of their Western counterparts. Nevertheless, the general motivation behind the realization of training and development activities differs for local and foreign firms. Most Kazakhstani companies, excluding small and medium size firms and multinational corporations, invest in development programs of their high-potential employees only due to having a legal obligation to do so (set by the government). Meanwhile, performance appraisal procedures are not as popular in Kazakhstan as in many European countries and the US because of the socio-cultural peculiarities (Minbaeva *et al.*, 2007). For instance, the 360 degree technique is usually not practiced in Kazakhstani organizations (Minbaeva *et al.*, 2007), which can be explained by the relatively high power distance in the society, or, in other words, when individuals conform to a hierarchy where everybody has a certain place (many Kazakhstani companies actually try to preserve a vertical organizational structure even when it does not benefit them).

Clanism seriously affects HRM implementation in Kazakhstan (Minbaeva & Muratbekova-Touron, 2013), but its influence varies from one organization to another. In state-owned companies, for instance, the effect of clanism is strong, meaning an employee's success on an interview or further promotion depend on his or her social capital, while in private companies and international organizations this effect is rather moderate and even low (Minbaeva & Muratbekova-Touron, 2013). Nevertheless, due to the increased competition caused mostly by private and international firms entering the Kazakhstani market that aim at attracting the best employees to gain a CA, more and more people without special connections get employed by state-owned organizations. To avoid nepotism and other pressures HR managers develop formalized recruitment processes the implementation of which is strictly regulated. Meanwhile, though discrimination by age and gender is generally prohibited in Kazakhstan, many headhunting agencies set various constraints and barriers for certain groups of workers. In particular, a number of organizations prefer hiring younger candidates and recent graduates, offering them, at the same time, smaller salaries (Smirnova & Tatibekov, 2013). The youth, being exposed to the Western way of thinking and conducting business as a result of advanced globalization, demands changes in the employer-worker relationship, which additionally facilitates renovation of the working environment. Consequently, in terms of innovative managerial solutions Kazakhstan is indeed leaving the past behind and moving towards a more stable and positive future.

Belarus: Where to go next

In Belarus the main government objectives of the labor market are jobs for everyone; rising personal income and an absence of large wage inequalities (Adarov *et al.*, 2016) – the Ministry of Labor and Social Development, created in 2010, is responsible for implementing

public policy, and performing management functions in the fields of labor relations, labor protection, employment, social security, demographic security, acting in a coordinating role on these matters in respect of the other republican bodies of government. A particularly distinct policy instrument is the country's use of wage scales to regulate wages for each individual profession. The scale is more of a benchmark than a law, but it still has a huge influence on salaries within Belarus. Wages above recommended levels represent seniority or previous work experience. In election years, the state was able to increase real wage growth by raising the respective scales. However, this was done at a rate that was faster than the productivity growth, subsequently leading to overheating of the economy in 2009-2010 and 2012-2014, both of which caused currency crises (Preiherman, 2014; Kramer, 2011; Bakunowicz, 2015).

The managers of state-owned enterprises, as it can be expected, are not entirely autonomous in their decision making, and must take political aspects into consideration instead of basing their verdicts entirely on economic indicators (Hellman *et al.*, 2000). Additionally, executives within state-owned enterprises tend to earn considerably less than their private counterparts in the country. Thus, managers do not generally receive supplementary incentives to enhance their performance or increase innovation. On the contrary, managers within public companies are liable to an abundance of regulations and controls to ensure they do not misuse their power for personal purposes. Even in private companies, however, all these measures stifle productivity and economic growth, reduce performance and impact personal well-being, though they also reduce economic inequality.

Migration to Belarus plays a limited role in Belarus' labor market due to the difficulties companies face in hiring international migrants. Belarus is not a particularly attractive destination due to the lack of social protection in addition to having to pay social security contributions (implemented recently) (Adarov *et al.*, 2016). As a matter of fact, many Belarusians temporarily work in Russia because of the higher salaries and generally more employment opportunities (both countries are part of the Eurasian Economic Union) (Adarov *et al.*, 2016). Whilst they usually send remittances home, the accompanying brain drain also hampers productivity and economic growth. In addition, the overwhelming majority of Belarusian organizations are (explicitly or implicitly) state-owned, with the state-appointed executives appointed, compensation based on seniority, and limited transparency of administrative systems due to the general legacy of the Soviet Union. The system of 'ideological control' in enterprises has grown much stronger over the past years, which presumably affected the HRM practices implemented by these organizations (yet to be proven).

Belarus is the only European country where mandatory placement after graduation still exists (Preiherman, 2012); nonetheless, local employers face various challenges when attracting high-potential workers due to the limited number of incentives they can generally offer (Carraher & Carraher, 2006; Latukha, 2016). Specifically, though organizations lean towards performance-based remuneration, there is a certain "ceiling" set by the government for both public and private companies. Additionally, recruitment is mostly based on informal connections and networking (HR managers generally refute this statement) (Latukha, 2016). In comparison, a traditional method of recruiting new employees – through official job centers – is mainly used for the hiring of low skilled workers. The central state in turn may directly allocate university graduates to particular firms (Preiherman, 2012). Personnel managers, understandably, prefer taking on interns and prospective employees that have a certain amount of experience or shortly worked for their companies.

The country's low remuneration gap between male and female workers as well as the high presence of women in managerial positions is commendable (Pastore & Verashchagina, 2005). This diversity in executive roles and equal pay has significantly boosted productivity, which is why Belarusian companies believe it is important to continue searching for and hiring of female employees and managers and making the workforce more diverse (it is not 'merely' a case of fairness) (Pastore & Verashchagina, 2005). Meanwhile, the existing compensation system is similar to that of the Soviet times: the fact that an employee's salary and

his or her actual performance are not aligned has far-reaching consequences for HR motivation. Employers are largely limited in the incentives they can provide to their workers (even for private companies). Leeway exists in the form of additional compensation; however, high potentials then become highly dependent on the decision-makers that determine who gets what and when. Another interesting observation is that in the case of financial distress a company can compensate its employees with the products manufactured by the firm itself (according to Article 74 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Belarus). In such a situation, employees are left with the choice of either accepting the offer or not getting paid at all. Other non-monetary benefits (e.g., housing or daycare provision, social welfare, medical insurance, and the like) are partially provided by the state. However, over the years, organizations have taken over this matter. Now HR departments are mostly responsible for providing such forms of nonmonetary compensation (e.g., organization of different social events aimed at resolving workplace conflicts) (Akulava *et al.*, 2013; National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, 2016). Therefore, employee turnover is particularly high among recent graduates that were allocated by the state to a specific enterprise. Once their mandatory allocation period ends, they tend to leave the organization due to the lack of career prospects, underutilization of their skills and low compensation (the labor market shows a low demand for professions most desirable for young talent) (Shraibman, 2013). This highlights the importance of merit-based promotions rather than promotions based on informal connections as skilled graduates often lack the latter and therefore are unable to move up the career ladder due to the positions being occupied by better-connected employees.

HR development is put in the hands of enterprise management, with the state only controlling the fulfilment of minimal requirements (e.g., industrial safety programs). In particular, the government requires all companies to provide employment and professional training for first-time job seekers under the age of 21, regardless of their skills and educational background (according to Article 280 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Belarus). In practice, however, firms tend to diverge from the decree, for instance, due to the recent economic crisis companies had to reduce their costs, thus negatively affecting motivation, job security, and productivity. Performance management practices are rather formal as well, mainly consisting of the superior making judgments on his or her subordinate's behavior, which is in accordance with the decree as well as Soviet standards. As mentioned above, Belarusian organizations do not practice performance-related pay. Nevertheless, employees are usually rewarded when completing complex assignments. To ensure intra-workforce cooperation and employee dedication great emphasis is placed on the labor collective, the significance of which has somewhat diminished over the past years. Personnel managers actively try to keep up the collective spirit and develop the feeling of belonging to something important.

Therefore, the invasiveness of the state, reliance on personal connections and paucity of traditional management techniques raise more than a few issues with regards to HRM and TM and organizational behavior in Belarusian companies, as demonstrated above. Whilst the country is highly recognized for gender equality, it faces many other issues concerning the attraction, development and retention of the best and the brightest, which, in turn, negatively affects the firm's ability to deal with uncertainty, properly implement change and respond to increased, international competition in the labor market (National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, 2016). Nevertheless, we can state that HRM in Belarus is noticeably improving (being the least developed compared to that of other CIS countries). For instance, in 2015 the country's first HR standard was developed (on the basis of an international HRM standard) that described all the functions of the HR department grouped by directions (e.g., recruitment, adaptation, trainings and personnel development, motivation, corporate culture, evaluation, development and administration), established ethical standards and developed KPIs for each type of activity and each level in the companies' hierarchy (Lazareva, 2015). In addition, Belarus annually holds the "HR-brand award of Belarus" event that attracts hundreds of guests including business owners, CEOs, and HR managers to provide the opportuni-

ty to learn about best practices and current trends in the HRM and TM fields, thus raising the level of managerial standards in the country.

Ukraine: To overcome crisis for further development

The economic and political turbulence in Ukraine has significantly affected the labor market. After the state coup, unemployment rates reached the highest points within the decade (The Ministry of Finance, 2018). Such result is explained by massive layoffs that the employers were forced to perform to avoid bankruptcy. During the year of 2015 the Ukrainian labor market was controlled by the employers: job seekers faced excessive requirements, while people, afraid of losing their jobs, bore with the same salaries levels (while the inflation rate reached 43%) and payment delays (Shkil, 2015). In general, people showed little activity regarding job search, causing the stagnation of the whole market (Shkil, 2015).

The military conflict forced people to migrate from the Eastern part of Ukraine to other regions, which led to a dramatic increase in demand for work. Before the conflict escalated most of the displaced people were blue-collars, however during and after these events more highly qualified personnel showed willingness to relocate. Due to the shortage of open positions people had to apply for the low-skilled jobs (usually referred to as brain waste (Mattoo *et al.*, 2008)) which may result in professional degradation (Kovalchuk, 2014). Nevertheless, the situation is expected to improve due to relatively positive dynamics in national economy. Recent trends show that the labor market is slowly recovering and companies are becoming more and more preoccupied with retention and motivation of young talent (Dvorskaya, 2017). The latter includes different forms of monetary remuneration and retention techniques, such as additional bonuses and team-building activities (Ivanets, 2016). In addition, the Parliament adopted the new Labor Code in December 2015, which follows the EU labor law in some of the key aspects. For instance, anti-discrimination amendments were introduced forbidding discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and the like. Some of the innovations aim at regulating labor relations during turbulence. Thus, the employees mobilized for military service retain their jobs, receiving their average pay for a one-year period. As it could be inferred, the new Labor Code of Ukraine is primarily concerned with providing social protection for employees. Taking into account the military conflict in the country the authorities use this Labor Code as a tool to control unemployment rates.

According to the Global Competitiveness Index Ukraine ranks rather low in labor market effectiveness. Inadequately educated workforce and poor work ethic in national labor force are considered as most problematic factors for doing business (World Economic Forum, 2017). Therefore, one cannot deny that an effective TM system can become a CA for enterprises operating in the Ukrainian market.

Though being very close to the CIS and CEE countries in its early 90-s development, Ukraine did not follow general trends of the region during later periods. While such countries, as Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, received huge investments from foreign companies and adopted West-European approach to managing people (Child & Czegledy, 1996), Ukraine in terms of evolution path of its HRM and TM systems resembled Russia more than any other country. The post-soviet approach to HRM formed in 2000-s, when employment relationships were finally legitimized and new psychological contracts between workers and managers were settled. The latter implied behavior based on large power distance, low degree of individualism, uncertainty avoidance and both short-term and long-term orientation (Hofstede, 1984). Personnel departments did not significantly differ in terms of structure and tasks in companies with different competitiveness levels and development strategies (Gurkov & Zelenova, 2009). The labor market faced increasing shortage of highly skilled workforce (Fey *et al.*, 1999), mostly due to mass brain drain phenomena and decrease in education quality (Khodakov, 2012).

Even though the Ukrainian mentality and working behavior are similar to those of the Russians, there are several features that distinguish employees of Ukrainian companies.

Ukrainian managers notice that local workers tend to complete tasks in longer time which could result from slower pace of life in the country. Moreover, they seem to be satisfied with a lower salary level compared to Russian employees; at the same time, nonmonetary motivation techniques tend to be underdeveloped (Talajlo, 2010). Furthermore, life/work balance is of extreme importance to Ukrainian people (International Labor Migration, 2011). Additionally, business activity in Ukraine is not centered in any particular city, consequently doing business in the country requires high level of mobility (Kupets, 2012). Finally, tensions in Russia-Ukraine relationships in many ways determine specifics of organization behavior, from decrease in motivation and increase of dissatisfaction that arise from open conflicts between employees of different nationalities (Borisov, 2013).

Methods that local managers use for managing employees vary depending on the size of the company they work in. For large companies, autocratic leadership style is typical: managers tend to make decisions on their own without any consultations, setting the tasks for employees in the form of indisputable orders (Lazorenko, 2008). Managers at SMEs, on the contrary, are mostly characterized by democratic leadership style (Lazorenko, 2008). Analysis of firms with different ownership structure show that private entities in Ukraine prove to have more resources for building efficient motivation programs; at the same time, workers of such companies are less protected in respect to employment preservation compared to those employed by state owned company. In addition, a number of problems currently existing in Ukrainian organizations that influence HRM and TM systems can be identified: mismatch between organizational structure and a company's strategic goals and needs; outdated labor-regulating documentation; inefficient motivation systems; underdeveloped control systems (Dorofeeva, 2012). The prevalence of negative-based motivation techniques (e.g. threats, reprimands, penalties) over positive-based approaches is also highlighted (Talajlo, 2010).

The Russia-Ukrainian conflict has affected retention practices as well. The war for HRs resumed with renewed vigor due to the emerging career opportunities in European labor market (Eurostat, 2017; European Commission, 2010). At the same time, the domestic migration increased as well: many people and companies moved from turbulent areas to quieter and stable Ukrainian regions. Coupled with economic downturn, this led to an unresolvable dilemma for companies located in militarized areas: they had to somehow retain their key employees from moving to other regions and, at the same time, they ensure their safety, while reducing their costs, including HR-related expenses (Didenko, 2014). Therefore, HRM and TM is becoming more and more relevant to Ukrainian companies. In the Ukrainian context the TM concept is still rather new, and many companies are not yet successful in adopting key Western-like practices, which is partially due to these managerial practices being context-specific; they usually do not work in environments that substantially differ from those where these practices were initially successfully implemented.

Talent management in CIS region countries

Managing talent in Kazakhstan: Overview of KAZ Minerals, Kazzinc, Tengizchevroil

Most of Kazakhstan's distinct TM practices reflect the cultural peculiarities and the country's historical legacy of the Soviet ways of managing employees. However, the Western tradition is slowly seeping into Kazakhstan, resulting in a 'hybrid' form of practices that shares the characteristics of both, Western and local, ways of thinking. This indicates that despite the dynamic economic growth of Kazakhstan, TM is still in transition from Soviet era practices to ones existing in foreign companies. The understanding of HRM practices in Kazakhstani firms varies from administrative functions to using HRs strategically for a company's growth (i.e. focusing on TM). Due the strong impact of the Soviet heritage on the different aspects of management, and behaviors of people, as well as certain cultural, economic and social factors in Kazakhstan and other CIS countries, there is generally a low variety of TM practices. Specifically, as a highly formalized Soviet society which is perceived as a culture with a higher

power distance between managers and subordinates and also as a more particularistic culture where social orientation prevails over a task orientation, Kazakhstani companies employ TM practices that show high rate of formalization in recruiting and training policies. TM is developing due to an adoption of various TM practices from Western companies, thus helping local companies become more competitive, boosting development of the country's economic sectors, and increasing Kazakhstan's attractiveness to foreign investors for further prosperity.

Compared to other CIS countries, Kazakhstan has a rather mature and developed TM system, which could be due to the fact that Kazakhstani organizations have been transforming their HR departments from post-Soviet towards the universalist approach at a quieter pace, allowing for sustainable organizational restructuring. It is worth noting, though, that in two of the reviewed cases – Tengizchevroil and Kazzinc – foreign companies from developed markets (specifically, from the US and Switzerland) held a 50+ percent interest, which could directly influence these companies' business operations. In particular, local companies most likely have direct access to valuable external knowledge (e.g. access to larger talent pools with foreign experts); they receive more financial support that gives them additional freedom in implementing unconventional managerial practices to achieve their corporate goals. So one can assume that in the case of Kazakhstan ownership structures and countries of origin played an important role in the development of corporate TM systems, talent attraction, development, and retention practices. However, future research is required on the topic.

Table 1 presents an overview of three case companies from Kazakhstan: KAZ Minerals, Kazzinc, Tengizchevroil. KAZ Minerals has a rather complex yet relatively effective TM system consisting of a variety of practices aimed mostly at developing qualified employees. The key challenges it encounters in order to develop and sustain its CAs are mostly connected to specificity of the industry it operates in. The key long run TM objective is to ensure industrial safety and create stable working environment, which means most talent decisions are aimed at reaching this goal: KAZ Minerals invests a considerable amount of its resources in developing certain skills of its workers, arranging a variety of safety programs and trainings on simulation machines, thus increasing their awareness of safety regulations to reduce future injuries and fatalities at the workplace and, as a result, create a positive image of the company for it to be capable of further attracting talent.

Meanwhile, the key objectives of the TM system at Kazzinc revolve around creating a healthy working environment. The company has to consider unconventional motivation techniques that would take into account the people's current needs to overcome the economic barriers and cultural peculiarities that currently exist in Kazakhstan. The company's efficiency is highly dependent on the level of motivation of its workers. There is also a perennial problem of high power distance in Kazakhstan. In an organizational context, this means employees are at arm's length from each other which leads to potential problems in communication and interaction. Feedback systems that are usually implemented by leading organizations in the West for employee development purposes stop working the way they should, becoming less effective and rather formal. Nonetheless, the company invests its resources to address these negative factors via creating equal rights for all workers, carrying out activities to reduce power distance, and continuously improving its development as well as motivation systems.

Finally, Tengizchevroil, striving to become the desirable employer, puts a lot of effort to attract talented workers, develop them and create a safe working environment. Similar to KAZ Minerals and Kazzinc, the company's TM objective is strongly connected to the corporate vision of becoming "the safest, most efficient and profitable oil and gas enterprise in the world". It aims at increasing the share of the local population in its employee ranks; however, due to the country's population ethnical diversity, the company has to deal with conflicts that occur between workers of different cultural backgrounds. In addition, Tengizchevroil regularly deals with clanism, which leads to biased recruitment and promotion. The reward system does not seem to work successfully either: internal communication problems are not addressed promptly, leading to public protests that negatively affect the company's reputation.

Table 1 Overview of KAZ Minerals, Kazzinc and Tengizchevroil

	KAZ Minerals	Kazzinc	Tengizchevroil
Headquarters	Almaty, Kazakhstan	Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kazakhstan	Atyrau, Kazakhstan
Ownership	–	Subsidiary of Glencore (69.61%)	Chevron (50%), ExxonMobil (25%), KazMunayGas (20%), LukArco (5%)
Industry	Mining	Mining	Oil and gas
Foundation	1992	1997	1993
Size	13K	20K	–
Talent definition	Elitist (focus on foreign specialists)	Universalist	Universalist
TM priority	Talent development Focus on promoting and ensuring safety	Talent development, retention Focus on promoting and ensuring safety	Talent attraction, development, retention Focus on promoting and ensuring safety
TM challenges and issues	Strong labor migration patterns Currency devaluation Remote location of operations High employee turnover Difficulty of attracting female talent to mining careers	Low perception of workplace safety and environmental issues by potential / current workers	Strong labor migration patterns Inactivity of young talent in job searching Low perception of workplace safety and environmental issues by potential / current workers Ethnic and cultural diversity issues
TM system	Emphasis on professional development, long-term efficiency, safety, team work, and honesty (serve as a basis for corporate culture)	Compliance with international industry standards Transparency and fairness as leading management principles	Compliance with safety requirements in the workplace Emphasis on diversity and inclusion, high performance, integrity and trust, partnership, and protecting the people and the environment
Talent attraction	(Mostly) Foreign talent recruitment Aim to create a highly diverse local talent pool by offering various benefits: competitive salary, opportunities for career growth, provided accommodation, and covered relocation costs	Foreign and local (prioritized) recruitment Internal recruitment for top level positions Cooperation with external research centers and laboratories based to gain access to the global talent pool Graduate programs and pre-hiring special tracks with partner-universities	CSR and engagement in raising women's competitiveness on the job market Internal and external talent methods of recruitment: Internet Job Boards and job fairs at universities to attract young prominent professionals (external); training and development opportunities (internal)
Talent development	Mentorship programs aimed at newly-hired employees to provide with the essential knowledge necessary for them to develop	Training, career development opportunities and an open environment for ideas and creativity are offered to all (regardless of race,	Career growth assistance policy Experience-building training and workforce development (technical, computer, manage-

	<p>practical skills and to facilitate the cultural adjustment</p> <p>Sponsoring employees (higher education)</p> <p>Mandatory industrial safety training (focus on electrical and fire safety, labor protection training, physical fitness and professional development training) required by the regulator in Kazakhstan</p> <p>Specialized training (depending on occupation)</p> <p>Individual performance evaluation</p>	<p>nationality, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, ancestry, political or other opinion, or any other bias)</p> <p>Corporate university established</p> <p>Support of distance learning system</p> <p>Partnership agreements with the leading higher education institutions in Kazakhstan and Russia</p>	<p>rial, interpersonal, organizational and language training): Leadership Program and Temporary International Assignment Program</p> <p>Mentorship programs</p> <p>Financial support for the most prominent employees to acquire Master and MBA level degrees</p> <p>Ineffective appraisal system (due to socio-cultural factors)</p>
Talent retention	<p>Safe working environment: policies and procedures designed to identify and monitor risks; regular health and safety assessments, illness and disability payouts, free medical services</p> <p>Fair remuneration in line with market rates of pay and social benefits packages for its employees and their families: paid vacations, contribution to pension schemes</p> <p>Open dialogue with management and a workplace culture which respects equality and diversity</p>	<p>Launched “Pyramid of motivation” based on Maslow’s theory of hierarchy of needs: creation of appropriate working conditions, performance-based remuneration (monthly and quarterly payments, bonuses, one-time cash compensation), social package, non-financial encouragement and bonuses, creation of achievements recognition (on Metallurgist day the best employees are awarded with Certificates of Appreciation), possibilities of self-realization</p>	<p>Performance-based remuneration system</p> <p>Nonmonetary motivation: employees are awarded with letters of recognition for the high quality of work and outstanding results; they can participate in development of informal life in the company by offering new ideas in the field of entertainment, professional growth, sports activities and work and family balance</p> <p>Benefits package: financial support for employees and families, health benefits, Employees Savings programs, sports programs, etc.</p>

Managing talent in Belarus: Overview of BELAZ, Santa Bremor and BSW

Due to the continuing Soviet-era economic and political traditions, resulting in liability of outsidership, Belarus has fallen significantly behind other CIS countries in terms of TM development. Strong governmental control over business and, more specifically, state ownership has led to organizations being less interested in TM implementation, and HR departments carrying out a functionalist role aimed at achieving short- and midterm corporate and personnel objectives. Because of various state policies and labor laws, Belarusian firms do not have to deal with severe competition outside the local market that can provoke lack of necessity for effective management practices implementation. HR managers, for instance, might not be much incentivized to develop and employ talent attraction practices when students after the graduation are assigned to the organization anyway. Though there is a risk of this leading to higher employee turnover (mandatory allocation assumes young talents do not have a say in where they will work), lower talent pool quality, underdeveloped HR policies, and, generally, lower involvement of the HR staff in the decision-making processes of the company, senior management are still hesitant to invest additional resources into TM. Belarusians do, in fact, believe in the effectiveness of nonmonetary compensation systems. In a time of crisis such systems usually serve as strong talent retention mechanisms that firms, such as BELAZ and Santa Bremor, use to ensure their employees continue working for the company. Belarusian firms have a lot of promise and in order for them to get international recognition they have to restructure their HRM system according to actual demands of the labor market.

Table 2 presents an overview of three Belarusian companies: BELAZ, Santa Bremor and Byelorussian Steel Works (BSW). There are not that many foreign MNCs in Belarus due to existing economic conditions, labor market peculiarities and business environment specificities. This limited amount of international companies generally leads to Belarusian firms being less familiar with the most innovative managerial practices that can increase the ability of the firms to effectively attract, develop, and retain talent, which is why the development pace of BELAZ is relatively low compared to organizations from other CIS countries. It continues working the way it is used to: recruitment procedures, career development opportunities as well as retention mechanisms have slightly evolved in the past decade. Nevertheless, BELAZ realizes the need for changes. In fact, it is the first Belarusian company to introduce SAP Human Capital Management in order to automate HR processes and catch up with modern approaches of conducting business.

Santa Bremor faces a number of challenges most of which arise from the Belarusian political system not being flexible enough in creating a dynamic space for conducting business as well the general inertia of Belarusian organizations. In particular, being shielded by state policies from real international competition, the pace of implementation and integration of innovative HRM practices coming from the West or the East is slow, despite being a Belarusian-German venture. Nevertheless, Santa Bremor is on the path of developing clear HRM policies to orient key managerial activities at achieving middle- and long-term corporate objectives, rather than short-term goals of a functional nature. In addition, the responsibility of making decisions regarding personnel recruitment, training and development, wage issues, labor relations and other important areas has begun to shift from line managers to specialized HR units, which is a positive trend, considering that line managers having the dominant position in such matters is generally a barrier for developing HRM and, a fortiori, TM.

Finally, BSW has rather developed managerial policies and practices aimed at achieving middle- and long-term strategic corporate objectives. Considering advanced globalization forces as well as the current economic situation in the country, BSW is doing quite well, promptly making necessary changes to its management systems in order to meet the international standards in terms of talent attraction, development and retention. BSW recognizes the significance of investing in its human capital assets to sustain and develop CAs.

Table 2 Overview of Santa Bremor and Byelorussian Steel Works (BSW)

	BELAZ	Santa Bremor	Byelorussian Steel Works (BSW)
Headquarters	Zhodzina, Belarus	Brest, Belarus	Zhlobin, Belarus
Ownership	–	Belarusian-German JV	State-owned
Industry	Automotive	Food	Steel
Foundation	1948	1998	1984
Size	11K	4K	12K
Talent definition	Universalist	Universalist	Universalist
TM priority	Talent motivation	Talent attraction	Talent attraction: creation of a “prime choice company”
TM challenges and issues	Instability of the national currency Under strict state regulations Gender diversity: lack of women in senior positions	Under strict state regulations High employee turnover	Gender diversity: lack of women (due to hazardous working conditions) Increasing level of international competition
TM system	Underdeveloped: TM is not recognized, HR specialists are seen as company employees responsible for hiring and firing other workers Emphasis on family-like organizational culture and national pride	Underdeveloped: mostly concerned with enforcing its HR policy and performing general personnel practices (e.g., recruitment, retirement planning, basic training, contract management, damage control, compensation, performance management, feedback provision, ensuring of security of personal information)	Compliance with the legislation and legal norms of the Republic of Belarus and involve all the units and business processes participants Transparency and openness as leading management principles Emphasis on employee equality and antidiscrimination
Talent attraction	Local talent recruitment via student allocation system or with the help of career agencies, job centers or career websites Internal recruitment for top level positions Collaboration with Belarusian universities Organization of excursions, meetings, and conferences for graduates – aim to deliver relevant information to newcomers Building strong HR brand: providing affordable housing, fast career start and dollar-equivalent salary	Foreign and local talent recruitment Traditional, rather formal and standardized talent attraction practices Building strong HR brand: offering interesting work, the ability to gain world-class international experience, professional development, a competitive salary and flexible system of bonuses, wide benefits package, and corporate activities	Ensuring transparency and fairness in selection and recruitment Building strong HR image: providing social equality and adequate standard of living for its employees and confidence in the future (e.g., housing for young talent, official registration, a decent salary, professional training, etc.), promoting safe working conditions and positive social-psychological climate in the working team

Talent development	<p>Training sessions oriented at increasing the productivity of employees' regular tasks and improving their technical skills in order to achieve a higher qualifying category</p> <p>Developed mentorship system: initial adaptation trainings and adaptation program</p>	<p>System of continuous professional training: advanced training courses, thematic seminars held by the National Press center and the Belarusian Institute for Retraining and Professional Development</p> <p>Mentorship program for effective knowledge transfer from more experienced to less experienced employees</p>	<p>Professional training at different stages of labor activity for all employees</p> <p>Establishment of a continuous professional education system</p> <p>Providing anytime-anywhere learning opportunities via a remote electronic system of module training «LearnBMZ»</p> <p>Organization of scientific and technical projects, aimed at establishing a multi-level personnel reserve of young workers</p> <p>Job rotation</p> <p>Fair and unbiased assessment of the work results</p>
Talent retention	<p>Corporate program “BELAZ Young People 2016-2020” developed that promotes the firm's HR-brand amongst the younger generation to empower and motivate talent</p> <p>Annual competitions between young workers organized (with financial stimuli)</p> <p>Support and nonmonetary remuneration systems implemented in order to help its talent to find work-family balance</p>	<p>Adoption of sophisticated nonmonetary compensation systems</p> <p>Creation of a steady environment and cozy psychological working atmosphere</p> <p>Introduction of new technology</p> <p>Creation an open dialogue system</p> <p>CSR: charitable donations to those in need, investments in various sports activities and cultural events, and support to religious organizations</p>	<p>Equal opportunities and benefits offered: bonus scheme for labor stimulation according to which all employees share equal rights, have additional benefits aimed at health and maternity protection</p> <p>Nonfinancial motivation schemes: organization of professional celebrations, sport and cultural events for the employees, their family members and the population of the region</p> <p>Improvement of welfare, corporate culture, personnel moral responsibility and material liability for quality of performed work: holding production competitions and contests in individual and collective forms</p>

Managing talent in Ukraine: Overview of Azovstal, Clickky and Naftogaz

In the time of crisis TM in Ukrainian organizations is considered to be a necessary socially responsible mechanism aimed at ensuring stability in the external and internal environment. Specifically, organizations with a clear TM agenda are seen as guarantors of stability in the region since the state itself is unable to provide its citizens the basic need of safety. This is what Ukrainian companies usually have in common. Azovstal, Clickky, and Naftogaz, in particular, share the same issue of the younger and older generations differently perceiving the value of TM practices due the former being exposed primarily to the Western management style and the latter to the Soviet authoritarian style. Nonetheless, Ukrainian organizations demonstrate the highest level of commitment when it comes to TM implementation as they want to sever their ties with the Soviet past and become internationally recognized firms that adhere to international quality standards. The key barrier, however, is the turbulent external environment which is slowing down the recovery of the entire region after the prolonged Ukrainian crisis of 2013-2014. Today Ukraine continues dealing with different issues, therefore it is important for local firms not to lose their CA and be ready for further development.

Table 3 presents an overview of three case companies from Ukraine: Azovstal, Clickky and Naftogaz. Azovstal is a prestigious place in the region to work at. The salaries exceed the average level and are paid on a regular basis, which, despite the geopolitical crisis, gives confidence in the future. The company has a clear TM agenda; however, there are a number of soft spots in the talent procedures resulting from the company attempting to implement rather conventional and inflexible practices aimed at attracting, developing and retaining talent in the context of high uncertainty. In conjunction with large power distance, typical for Ukraine (Hofstede, 1984), this leads to significant obstruction to knowledge flow within the company: lag in horizontal knowledge flow may increase working cycle due to delays caused by untimely access to required information; poor knowledge flow between different hierarchical levels obviously decreases the extent to which Azovstal is able to react to external challenges and thus undermines company's flexibility, affecting its sustainability and calling into question of Azovstal's success; inability of ordinary employees to access top-managers easily results into suppression of their capacity to innovate. Meanwhile, due to the unstable situation in the region, people are forced to migrate to other regions. The whole situation contributes to people's anxiety, and Eastern Ukrainian employers, including Azovstal, have faced low personnel performance on working places and voluntary layoffs. While the state is the guarantor of citizen's safety (so far the government has failed to provide people with their basic need for safety), the employer is the guarantor of stability. In order to address employees' concerns about their future, Azovstal aims to provide its staff with decent working conditions.

Clickky's approach to TM is unique in a sense that the company managed to integrate best practices adopted from leading organizations in the IT field and the strengths of the local management style. The analysis of Clickky demonstrates that it is in fact possible for Ukrainian companies to overcome crisis for further development. Even though the company is small and operates internationally, the general clarity in mission, corporate objectives and values as well as the strong belief that talented workers can make a difference are the key success factors. Driven by its faith in building a rapidly growing company with highly self-motivated employees, Clickky gives its workers a lot of freedom to make work-related decisions. Since Ukraine's economic situation highly affects the financial results of the firm, Clickky encounters different issues connected to extrinsic motivation of its employees that are acute not only from the financial point of view, but also from the personal point of view. Important to mention that Clickky's corporate culture is very strong (with the words "dynamic" and "young" being part of the corporate values) and serves as a mechanism for inner motivation. In addition, Clickky has a set of standards to push intellectual competition between individuals and between groups. The company devises high expectations and lays pressure on the employees with the aim of developing top talent: all workers are expected to work late into the night, because Clickky's transparency policy differentiates the high-achievers from the low-achievers.

Table 3 Overview of Azovstal, Clickky and Naftogaz

	Azovstal	Clickky	Naftogaz
Headquarters	Mariupol, Ukraine	Odessa, Ukraine	Kyiv, Ukraine
Ownership	Subsidiary of Metinvest Holding	–	State-owned
Industry	Steel	Mobile advertising	Oil and gas
Foundation	1930	2010	1991
Size	13K	90	75K
Talent definition	Universalist	Elitist (though all workers are labeled as talented, they are identified either as low- or high-achievers)	Elitist (28% labeled as talented)
TM priority	Talent retention: To ensure stability, create a positive and safe working environment, prevent voluntary turnover	Talent identification and attraction	Talent retention: To ensure a minimum level of financial and social stability; To improve the management system
TM challenges and issues	Destabilization and crisis in the country (resulting in massive layoffs, and incentive mechanisms and training programs being temporarily discontinued) Fierce competition for young talent Scarcity of young talent Unattractiveness of industrial sector to young people	Destabilization and crisis in the country High employee turnover due to intensive workload and strict work requirements	Destabilization and crisis in the country Financial issues (debts) Labor market instability and talent scarcity Talent decisions made in accordance with the values of the dominant coalition that comprises state representatives and senior managers (strong involvement of the state)
TM system	Fairness and transparency as leading management principles Compulsory implementation of cost-cutting programs (~Pause or no-change strategy)	TM system at international divisions adjusted to local content Emphasis on corporate culture (key values are innovation, happiness, efficiency and team)	Emphasis on addressing employees' primary concerns (i.e. workplace safety and monetary remuneration), and ensuring equality, transparency and fairness in the workplace
Talent attraction	Open competitions for positions and job rotation principles Talent pool expansion programs Educational projects aimed at finding young talent and developing their abilities (including summer internships)	Hiring announcements made in social media Preference given to local young talent (due to high levels of staff turnover) Three-week training course (Mobile Starts School in Odessa) Paid internships for students	Foreign and local talent recruitment Anti-discrimination recruitment policy (equal opportunities employer) Traditional methods of talent attraction: partnering with major recruiting agencies and posting relevant information on the company's webpage about open positions

Talent development	<p>Career promotion policy</p> <p>Career management system for executives</p> <p>Strategic Leadership Development program (with INSEAD)</p> <p>Career path development</p> <p>Annual appraisals</p>	<p>Professional development (e.g., language courses)</p> <p>Participation in international conferences to raise brand recognition, attract international experts, and exchange knowledge</p> <p>Semiannual performance reviews</p>	<p>Collaboration with universities, special internships and mentorship programs aimed at helping young specialists to quickly adapt to the corporate environment</p> <p>Participation in and organization of academic conferences to interact with prospective students, academics and business representatives</p> <p>Corporate university (~training center) established for skills and professional qualifications improvement (language courses)</p> <p>Standardized appraisal system</p>
Talent retention	<p>Social support to all employees and their families (regardless of talent status)</p> <p>Launch of a special system for recognizing good business ideas (brings idea-creators additional earnings)</p>	<p>No additional fringe benefits or bonuses except for the salary</p> <p>Interesting tasks and a safe but informal and highly dynamic working environment provided</p> <p>Various team-building activities organized</p> <p>Performance-based compensation</p> <p>Employees encouraged to commence own projects</p>	<p>Social benefits package (includes meal subsidies, tuition coverage, recreational programs for workers and their families, special support for pensioners, veterans and disabled employees)</p> <p>Above-average salary</p> <p>Fair remuneration</p>

Finally, Naftogaz, as a state owned enterprise, is represented by state officials that regularly get involved in the decision-making process to promote various state policies and realize the country's political agenda via the organization's operations. Keeping in mind the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia, the former has decided to set its eyes to the West and, as a result, Naftogaz underwent a series of significant changes, which include creating a value-adding HRM system with clearly set objectives, one of which is a long-term oriented TM objective to ensure a decent life for the society through sustainable income growth, and create opportunities for self-development and creative work. This objective reflects the current tendencies of the Ukrainian labor market – people want to have a stable stream of revenue, feel safe, and have realizable career and development opportunities. Nevertheless, the state's involvement is strong, which limits the firm's ability to make unbiased business decisions. In particular, organizational culture building as well as internal communication get compromised due to the incompatibility of different groups of workers with varying political opinions. In any case, the core TM and HRM strategies of Naftogaz revolve around ensuring stability and safety (similar to other Ukrainian organizations). Most of the adopted TM practices are rather mature (in a sense that they have passed the test of time in leading Western organizations) and the HRM system is rapidly developing.

Conclusion

In this paper I present a thorough analysis of TM practices in local companies of Kazakhstan, Belarus and Ukraine. I pay special attention to the country-specific environments that shape the peculiarities of these TM practices and provide discussion about its future perspectives within CIS context. All of the case studies presented in this review illustrate how different companies from the specified countries deal with such key issues of TM as attraction, recruitment, indoctrination, development, motivation and retention of high-potential employees. I now conclude with demonstrating that the development of TM is influenced by a number of factors, some of which are rather specific to Kazakhstan, Belarus and Ukraine, but at the same time can be featured as common for the CIS context.

Regarding the main similarities and differences in TM practices implemented by organizations from different CIS countries, I first mention that the specificity of the HRM systems in all countries is generally determined by the historical legacy of the Soviet mental software (e.g., highly centralized organizational structure, strict hierarchy, high power distance, authoritarian leadership style, etc.). Therefore, a common feature of organizations from Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Ukraine is the generally higher rate of formalization in TM policies, especially compared to that of Western European and American countries and some CEE countries. Nevertheless, in Belarusian and Kazakhstani companies, universalist talent definitions remained predominant, whereas open performance appraisal systems were unpopular and performance-based remuneration mechanisms remained underdeveloped. In Ukrainian companies, I observed a persistence of elitist talent definitions and a preeminence of talent retention practices. In turn, organizations from Kazakhstan focused more on talent development practices, while Belarusian firms concentrated on a particular aspect of TM, specifically attracting, developing and retaining young specialists.

If one would attempt ranking these countries in terms of TM maturity, the first place would definitely go to Kazakhstan, with Ukraine and Belarus falling behind. Kazakhstan is the only country out of the three which managed to create a 'hybrid' form of practices that share the characteristics of both, Western and local, TM systems. Moreover, Kazakhstani organizations have been transforming their HRM departments from post-Soviet towards the universalist approach at a quiet pace, allowing for sustainable organizational restructuring. It is worth noting, though, that in two of the cases – Tengizchevroil and Kazzinc – foreign companies from developed markets (specifically, from the US and Switzerland) hold a 50+ percent interest, which directly influences these companies' business operations. In particular,

local companies most likely have direct access to unique knowledge (that includes access to larger talent pools with highly professional foreign experts); they receive more financial support that gives them additional freedom in implementing unconventional managerial practices to achieve their corporate goals. So one can assume that in the case of Kazakhstan ownership structures and countries of origin played an important role in the development of corporate TM systems, talent attraction, development, and retention practices. However, future research is required on the topic.

In comparison, Ukraine's transformation was rather chaotic – due to the military conflict that began at the year-end for 2013 in the different parts of the country (mostly in Eastern regions), territorial disputes with Russia over Crimea, investment drain and many other negative exogenous factors local companies were striving for survival rather than global success and market leadership. In order to recover at a faster pace organizations from Ukraine were practically forced to implement such HR practices that would, in a short period of time, optimize core operations and ensure workplace safety. In particular, they became guarantors of stability in the region as the state itself was incapable of providing its citizens with the basic need of personal safety. Senior management demonstrated great commitment when it came to TM adaptation and implementation (considering the country's desire to break off all relations with Russia and the Soviet past); nevertheless, I believe that organizations would not have been incentivized to invest in long-term practices of talent attraction, talent development and talent retention if it were not for the recent Ukrainian crisis. As for Belarus, strong governmental control over business led to firms being shielded by the state from foreign competition, thus resulting in liability of outsidership for Belarusian companies (i.e., the consequences of having limited access to knowledge networks). Organizations are therefore not interested in TM implementation, while HR departments carry out a functionalist role aimed at achieving short- and mid-term corporate and personnel objectives.

I conclude by stating the following: as CIS firms are building their dynamic capabilities, TM, regardless of country of origin, should be considered as an additional source of CA to withstand the modern market demands.

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